TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE PHILADELPHIA

grid

MARCH 2009 / ISSUE 2 GRIDPHIL

FREE TAKE ONE

FOOD BUZZ The blog that has locavores talking

LOCAL ROUND-UP
Peach turnovers, soft bowls and insects

BEER HERE!
Philly reclaims its proud brewing tradition

A NEW KENSINGTON?

North Philly's quest for sustainability

Sandy Salzman, executive director of the New Kensington Community Development Corporation

BarberGale

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Spring 2009 Program Series

CITIZEN SCIENCE

6:30 P.M. Reception & informal information session
7:00-9:00 P.M. Program followed by Q&A

The Schuylkill Center's Citizen Science Series includes lectures on current environmental issues, led by local experts. Each program gives participants the information and confidence necessary to make educated choices around environmental issues. Citizen science encourages civic engagement in scientific issues.

Tuesday, April 21st | Invasive Plants in the Philadelphia Area
Alfred E. Schuyler
Curator Emeritus of Botany at The Academy of Natural Sciences
Invasive plants have been the subject of considerable environmental concern in the Philadelphia area. In this lecture, Dr. Schuyler will discuss how invasives differ from non invasives and the environmental impacts of invasives from the 18th century to the present day.

Thursday, May 7th | Bald Eagles in Philadelphia—A Successful Recovery

Thursday, May 21st | Sustainable Sites Initiative of the American Society of Landscape Architects
Panel Discussion

Thursday, June 4th | Greening Your Transportation Choices: Can you live without your car?
Panel Discussion

For descriptions and up-to-date information please visit:

The Schuylkill Center | for Environmental Education

www.schuylkillcenter.org 8480 Hagy's Mill Road | Philadelphia, PA 19128 | Phone: 215-482-7300

Creative change

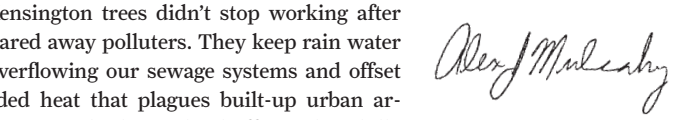
When the New Kensington CDC was faced with mountains of garbage being dumped on their neighborhood's vacant lots, they came up with an ingenious idea: plant trees around the perimeters of vacant lots. Just the presence of trees stoically standing guard proved discouragement enough for would-be garbage dumpers.

One of the most exciting aspects of the sustainability movement is witnessing how it awakens creativity in people and communities. Look at the chairs created by Philadelphia University students from inner tubes, milk crates and mattresses. That stuff is junk, right? (We noticed that in each of the first two issues we had a headline proclaiming, "Trash Into Treasure!" Clearly this will be a recurring theme in *Grid*.) Local seamstress Reesha Grosso's how-to on making a bag from discarded vinyl gives you the opportunity to participate in this trend yourself. While you're in the do-it-yourself mode you can try your hand at crafting a homebrew, like our burgeoning community of local beer pioneers did.

Often we use concepts and activities for a single reason, yet the benefits can be many. Those New Kensington trees didn't stop working after they scared away polluters. They keep rain water from overflowing our sewage systems and offset the added heat that plagues built-up urban areas, known as the heat island effect. The Philly U. students' chairs and Reesha's bag not only create practical, unique and aesthetically compelling items—they also keep trash from heading to the landfill, and can potentially create local and sustainable businesses. Next time you pick up a delicious bottle of locally brewed beer remember how small it started, and how empowering it feels to create something yourself.

When we needed racks to hold copies of our beloved *Grid,* we found Machele Nettles, a local industrial designer, who loved the idea of creating something new and unique from discarded materials. Machele found large wooden spools—used for electrical wire on construction sites—to create our more traditional sized racks. We also needed some smaller racks for the hundreds of coffee shops, bars and retailer outlets where space is at a premium, so Machele bought some records for 5 cents apiece from the Philadelphia Record Exchange and created a clever and sleek smaller model. Please contact Ashley Jerome (ashley@gridphilly.com) if you would like either of these racks in your business or community center.

Creative solutions and waste reduction—if not elimination—are hallmarks of the sustainable world we're moving toward. And we might see some more trees, and jobs, too.



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Word on the street

Early praise and constructive criticism

I JUST WANTED TO WRITE and say that I am *very very* impressed with your prototype magazine and this is exactly what I would like to see as far as communicating about sustainable living issues in Philadelphia. The design is great and accessible and not overly hyped on the green wave, so to speak, which I appreciate, as we are bombarded every day with more and more "green marketing" schemes. Thank you again for starting this magazine and I look forward to the issues! STEPHANIE CHIOREAN

I have read the two *Grid* editions thus far. As an urban dweller and greener, I must tell you this is a *great* magazine. I'm telling everyone to get a copy for themselves. The articles are informative without being preachy—the one on digital inclusion should be a 'must read.' The column by Mark Alan Hughes is important because we have to get the word out that we *have* an Office of Sustainability. I wish you all the best! SUSAN M. PRINGLE

I must say that I wasn't thoroughly engaged in the promotional issue, but this first issue has hit the nail on the head. Kudos for offering well written articles with a local emphasis that don't treat me like a child or assume I'm a sustainability expert. I've only gotten half way through this issue and decided to become a subscriber. Looking forward to reading this one cover to cover and getting the next. MARTIN BROWN

I was perusing *City Paper* over the weekend, and I read the article featuring *Grid*. When I came home from work, I immediately downloaded the first issue, and I love it. I am especially looking forward to the Food Issue slated for next year. Counterculture food movements are actually the focus of my senior thesis, and I am quite voraciously collecting everything I can find about them—not only for my paper, but for my personal education, too. MADDIE CHERA

What a great publication: I am an instant-fan. More importantly, the resources really have staying power, and I'll be keeping it around for future referencing. NED RAUCH-MANNINO

I just heard about you guys via a friend and I'm excited to see you featuring bike-sharing on your prototype cover, which is something that I'm definitely excited about seeing develop in our city... I just downloaded the first issue and it looks great!

Although, speaking of that cover—it did strike me that it seems that every person piled on the bike in that illustration looks pretty white white white... I'm not a hardcore political-correctness diversity propaganda kind of person, but for a real focus on sustainability, you're going to need to appeal to a broader demographic than the eco-chic caucasian crowd. JACQUES-JEAN TIZIOU

Need to get something off your chest?
Write us at *feedback@gridphilly.com*

Read back issues online at www.gridphilly.com

BIKE ISSUE PROTOTYPE, SEPTEMBER 2008

ENERGY ISSUE NO. 1, FEBRUARY 2009

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE PHILADELPHIA
grid
SAVE MONEY ON ENERGY BILLS!
What everyone in Philly needs to know
THE ENERGY ISSUE
APOLLO'S CREED
Mike McKinley talks about Philly's solar future
TRASH INTO TREASURE
Your old computer, their new start

ALLIANCE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
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Daily Dish

Farm to Philly hosts bloggers who eat locally, seasonally

by TENAYA DARLINGTON

I MAY NOT BE A LOCAVORE—the word for someone who tries to source food from within 100 miles of her home—but I am definitely a locavore voyeur. I like knowing what people are cooking within 100 miles of my house. No wonder I've become a fan of the group food blog Farm to Philly. Call it a peep show into local kitchens. Yesterday I ogled a squash gratin dinner, then a post on purple soup. It inspired me to SEPTA over to Reading Terminal for red cabbage and purple potatoes so I could slow-cook my own lavender stew.

Nicole Wolverton, who runs Farm to Philly out of her house in Alden, PA, wants to show people that it's possible to eat locally and seasonally "12 months out of the year, no problem." She launched the site in July 2007 after immersing herself in books about food politics and rethinking her own connection to local agriculture. "My grandparents were farmers, and it occurred to me that it would be nice to support the local farmers," she says. "For being a major metro area, we really have an amazing farm community—from New Jersey to the Amish here in Pennsylvania."

Wolverton put out a call for writers and netted a dozen bloggers committed to cooking with local ingredients. The cast of characters is diverse, from a high school English teacher who lives in Queen Village, to a West Philly "environmentalist gastronome." Kevin Parker, the English teacher, says that joining the blog has inspired him to be a more resourceful cook. It's also made him plan a winter pantry. "I am a big coward when it comes to preserving food. The Farm to Philly writers have convinced me that the process is not that time-consuming, labor-intensive, or, um, dangerous."

The site provides posts on canning and making butter, along with links to local farms and markets. Have you heard about Vampire Slayer cheese? Check out Calkins Creamery. Are you curious about local, organic tofu? There's a link to Fresh Tofu Inc. in Allentown, along with recipes. In fact, last February the bloggers took a Tofu Challenge and spent the month trying dishes, reviewing brands and photographing jiggly concoctions.

"Right now [in late January] we're doing the cabbage-kale challenge," Wolverton says, "so I'm really into lacinato kale. The leaves are thinner, and the color is a dark blackish green." She loves to put it in soups or sauté it with butter and a little chicken stock.

← Nicole Wolverton, the founder of farmtophilly.com

By day, Wolverton works as a fundraiser for Medical Students for Choice, a reproductive health advocacy group; and by night she raises awareness about local food, blogging weekly home-cooked meals, hunting for new regional specialties and building a community around sustainable food practices. "We got together for brunch once not too long ago," she notes, but otherwise Farm to Philly is not an eating group. The blog links one food lover to another and, like a pea vine, shoots out into the ether attracting others who want to cook and shop locally. "I get a lot of questions from people about what CSA [Community Supported Agriculture] to join," she says, "and once a woman who was moving to the area emailed to find out where she should shop."

In the future, Wolverton hopes farmers will use her site to post about the growing season. For now, Farm to Philly is a great resource for foragers, recipe hunters and anyone who enjoys a quick click into a nearby kitchen. Who knew that a tofu sandwich on someone else's cutting board could look so good? ■

Hungry for more? Visit farmtophilly.com

PHOTO BY LOU CALTABIANO

EAT THIS ↘

Three Springs Farm Canned Peaches

You can enjoy local peaches even when they aren't in season, thanks to the canning prowess of the good folks at Three Springs Fruit Farms. Halved and packed in light syrup, these white freestone peaches give you an early taste of spring. *Fair Food Farmstand, Reading Terminal Market, 12th & Arch, 215-627-2029* whitedogcafefoundation.com/farmstand_newsletter/farmstand_4.28.08.html

Ray's Seitan

Local, low fat, high protein, wheat gluten perfection. Taste approved by both the vegetarians and the non-vegetarians of *Grid. Essene Market, 719 S. 4th St., 215-922-1146* essenemarket.com

Betty's Tasty Buttons: Brotherly Love Fudge

Indulge your Philly pride and your sweet tooth. Brotherly Love Fudge is a double-decker delight of chocolate and vanilla fudge with cocoa nibs. Pick up a box and inside you'll find nine pieces of locally-made, all-natural fudge. *Betty's Tasty Buttons, 2241 Greys Ferry Ave., 215-735-9060* bettysfudge.com

FIRE IN THE KITCHEN

with Ashley Jerome

Peach Turnovers

1/2 can	**Three Springs Fruit Farm Canned Peaches** [←]
3 tbsp	Peach jelly
1 tbsp	Cornstarch
1/8 tsp	Cinnamon
1 frozen	Puff pastry sheet, thawed
1 lg	egg, beaten
2 tbsp	Cold **Green Meadows butter,** [→] cut into cubes
1 tbsp	Sugar

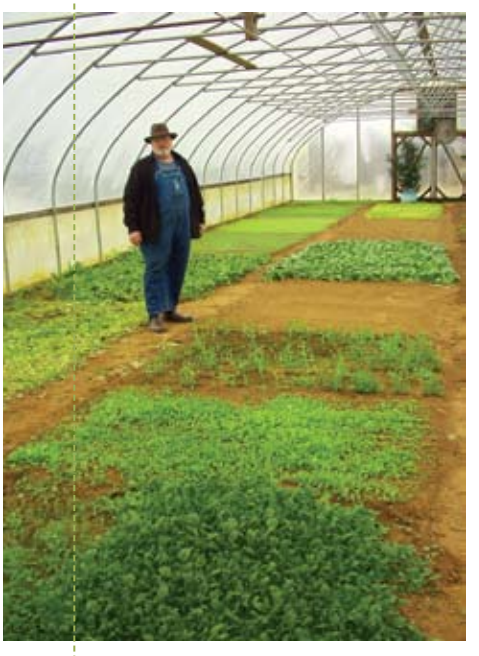
Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Butter a large baking sheet.

Stir the peaches, cinnamon, jelly and cornstarch in a bowl. Roll out the puff pastry sheet on a floured surface into a 12x9-inch rectangle. Cut into 6 squares. Divide peach mixture evenly, leaving a 1-inch border on all sides. Brush egg onto the border. Place a cube of butter on top of the filling. Fold into a triangle and crimp the edges with a fork. Cut a large vent on top of each turnover. Brush the top with egg and sprinkle with sugar. Bake for 20 minutes.

Green Meadows Farm

The butter used in the peach turnover recipe is from farmer Glenn Brendle. Since 1981, he has harnessed the power of minimum-impact farming. His house and 4,200 square feet of greenhouses are heated with vegetable oil cast off from the local restaurants he supplies, like Vetri, James, Mugshots and Chloe. No sprays, chemicals, herbicides or pesticides touch his precious plants. Brendle wards off bug infestations with Integrated Pest Management, an eco-compatible insect control system that includes predator insects and a light spray of soap and vegetable oil emulsion. He also uses compost made of crop cover to ward off weeds, trap in nitrogen and stabilize the soil.

Brendle will soon be implementing underground water pipes, using waste vegetable oil to heat asparagus, strawberry gardens and specialty herbs, allowing for earlier harvesting periods. Just a short ride west, his farm offers butter, cheese, a variety of meats and fresh produce, and even the apple cider vinegar we featured last month. Available at: *Fair Food Farmstand; Almanac Market, 900 N. 4th St., 215-625-6611* almanacmarket.com



Urban Jungle, Concrete Farm

Philly represents at statewide urban farming conference

by PHIL FORSYTH

On February 7, over 80 enthusiastic farmers and eaters packed a workshop called Small Space Community Food Production in State College. Lisa Mosca and Sharat Samashekara of Philly Green—a division of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society—energized the crowd about the possibilities of sustainable agriculture in an urban environment. In the crowd were some of the 120 folks, according to the official count, from Philly and the Southeastern Pennsylvania region that trekked to State College for the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's (PASA) Farming for the Future conference. They came from urban farms, farmer's markets and blogs to learn, network and, of course, eat some great local food.

"Our city is proving to be a big player in sustainable agriculture, and we should be proud of that," says Jennie Love of local food blog straightfromthefarm.com. In fact, Philadelphia's urban farms have increased exponentially in the last five years.

PASA is a member-based, sustainable farming organization that works to improve the economic prosperity, environmental soundness and social propriety of our agricultural system. They connect farmers with consumers through initiatives like Buy Fresh Buy Local and Good Food Neighborhood. Its annual Farming for the Future Conference, now in its 18th year, is widely considered the most significant on the East Coast and one of the three most important in the country. The majority of participants are farmers, and Philadelphians would be pleased to recognize so many faces from the tables of our farmer's markets, like Gina Humphreys of Urban Girls Produce and Tom Culton of Culton Organics. Over 2,000 people attended this year's conference, including a record 700 first-time participants. Lauren Smith, PASA's Conference Coordinator, was "especially encouraged to see so many young farmers at the conference." Given that the median age of farmers in the United States now exceeds 60 years, this is a very good sign for the future of food production in our country.

Keynote speaker Raj Patel, author of *Stuffed and Starved*—a critique of industrial food production—opened the conference with an engaging and impassioned plea that "food sovereignty" be restored as a fundamental right of all people. The conference featured meals cooked from food grown by member farmers, an agricultural job fair and an awards ceremony honoring the accomplishments of sustainable farmers. The Sustainable Tradeshow filled the halls with almost 80 exhibitors showcasing everything from large-scale farm equipment companies to individual farmers selling their cheeses. Seventy-five workshops were offered on subjects such as "Holistic High-Density Planned Grazing," "Bugs & Bunnies: How to Outwit Them in the Backyard Garden" and "Solar Electric Systems 201: Basics and Beyond." The wide variety of topics appealed to a diverse audience, including organic farmers, backyard gardeners, farmer's market managers, locavores and environmental activists. Despite all these official educational opportunities, most attendees agreed that the most valuable aspect of the conference was actually the learning and socializing that occurs in and around the workshops and other activities. David Siller of Weaver's Way Farm summed it up: "It's really the only time all year when farmers can get together and inspire each other."

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Ask Mark

Philadelphia's Director of Sustainability, Mark Alan Hughes, answers our readers

Q: When I saw you speak at Johnny Brenda's a few months ago, you mentioned an idea to make Philadelphia government offices more energy-conscious by tracking their usage, setting goals and rewarding conservation efforts. Since that time, Mayor Nutter has announced massive cutbacks and I couldn't help but wonder if your plan to curb the energy use by government offices has been put into effect.
—Elizabeth Reed, *Northern Liberties*

A: Thanks, Elizabeth. That's a great question and it couldn't be more timely. As Philadelphians face an unprecedented economic crisis, the sustainability agenda is more important than ever. That's because sustainability is fundamentally about ending present waste and avoiding future costs. Both things are part of the solution to a budget crisis like the one facing Philadelphia and governments across the country.

Let's recap that crisis: As with all cities, we must have a balanced budget. But in addition, Philadelphia is required to also have a balanced five-year budget, and each of those five years must be balanced. After closing a gap of about one billion dollars in the five-year plan just a few months ago, we now need to close another billion-dollar gap that has opened as the economy continues to worsen.

These gaps open up for two main reasons. First, our tax revenues are falling as people earn less, buy less and businesses sell less. Second, as the investments we use to pay our pension obligations decline in value, the shortfall needed to pay our retirees must be made up with money from tax revenues. Decreased money coming in and increased money going out creates a gap.

The Target Energy Budgets we discussed at Johnny Brenda's are one way of working to close that gap. City departments (e.g. Recreation, Police or Public Health) don't pay their electric or gas bill. Heck, they never even see the bill. They're all paid centrally. That means no one has an incentive to change their behavior. Turning off the lights doesn't save them any money and propping open the door when the a/c is on doesn't cost them any money.

> "City departments don't pay their electric or gas bill—they never even see the bill. That means no one has an incentive to change their behavior."

In a few months, all that will change. Every department will receive a Target Energy Budget for each of their facilities (firehouses, rec centers, libraries, health centers, etc.). These Targets will be 10 percent lower than this year's spending. (It's more complicated than that, but that's the basic idea.)

If a department doesn't meet its Target, the difference will be subtracted from the program budget the following year. If they exceed the target, then the department gets a bonus equal to the difference in their next program budget. Every expert will tell you that 10 percent savings are easy to find in a building where electricity and gas are treated as if they are free.

This is basically a shared savings plan in which the general budget gets the first 10 percent saved and the department gets all the savings after that. The plan should save over $3 million in next year's budget and every year after.

It's a great example of how the smart environmental option is often a smart economic option, too. And we're implementing it earlier than we might have because of, not in spite of, the bad economy.

Have a question for Mark? Send an email to askmark@gridphilly.com

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Rags to Bags

How to make a lovely vinyl accessory out of trash

by REESHA GROSSO
photos by PAUL ROMANO

MY YEARS AS A seamstress at Viv Pickle Custom Handbags have conditioned me to see anything flat and flexible as a potential bag or accessory. So when a friend offered me some vinyl test prints from her workplace, I knew just what to do with them. Printers frequently discard banners with imperfections that render them useless to the customer. With a sharp eye and a bit of sweet-talking (or bribery with baked goods), they could be yours for the taking.

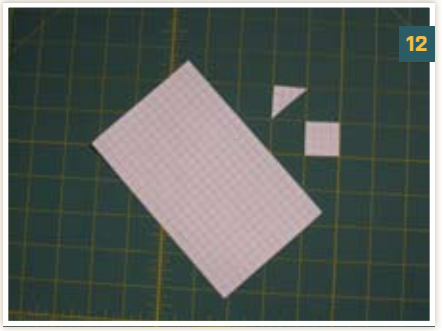
Large format printers manufacture posters, billboards and signage with images ranging from luscious burritos to bold graphics and text. Standard banner vinyl is a nylon-reinforced, non-woven material that is flexible enough to form and shape and is suitable for sewing. Banner vinyl is printed up to 16-feet wide and is made for outdoor use, so it's waterproof, durable and fade-resistant.

Supplies you will need:

- ❑ scrap vinyl
- ❑ 12-inch zipper
- ❑ ruler
- ❑ scissors or a rotary cutter
- ❑ ballpoint pen
- ❑ binder clips
- ❑ cardboard corner
- ❑ sewing machine

When sewing vinyl, remember that punctures are permanent. Backstitch no more than necessary to prevent perforation and weakening of the material. Instead of pinning things in place, I use three-quarter-inch binder clips. I recommend using a workhorse of a sewing machine, with all metal parts if possible. Use caution—your needle will get hot from friction during sewing, and you may want to use a denim needle to prevent breakage. Vinyl is very resilient and will fight you every step of the way; in order to wrangle it into submission, you may need to apply a cool iron. Use a press cloth (undyed cotton) and crack a window to avoid inhaling the fumes. Finally, aim for abstract imagery to avoid using copyrighted material in your work—the enormous scale of the prints should pretty much do this for you. Now that you're armed with the basics, let's get sewing!

1. Select the choicest cut from your vinyl. Look for an area with bold contrasting colors—in this case, a slice of each layer of cheeseburger.
2. Cut a 9x12-inch piece of vinyl. Since you are using a scrap, don't assume that any edges are squared. If you don't have a cutting mat, you can draw guidelines on the back side of the vinyl and cut with scissors.
3. Choose thread colors. There will be two topstitched lines on the accessory, so choose different colors for the machine and bobbin for contrast.
4. Fold over the 9-inch edges of the vinyl. Finger-press a half-inch down using the presser foot as a guide and a third hand, and tack down at about a quarter-inch from the edge, repeating on the second side.
5. Flip over and attach the zipper to the first side. Place the folded edge of the vinyl right up against the zipper teeth. (Attaching the vinyl an inch or so from the bottom of the zipper will make the next step easier.) At one-eighth-inch seam allowance, attach the zipper to the body of your accessory.



6. Now attach the second half of the bag to the zipper. Make two tiny pen marks on the vacant side of the zipper to make it easier to line up. Open the zipper and fold the vinyl around into a tunnel. Clip in place at pen marks.

7. Sew the zipper to the body at one-eighth-inch seam. Remove clips as you move along. Take your time on this step; it can be a little awkward, but it ultimately reduces the number of unfinished edges inside the bag.

8. Flip the bag into a tunnel with the reverse side out. Close the zipper about 6 inches, leaving the last 3 inches open.

9. Lay flat with the zipper at the top and clip in all four corners, starting with the open zipper side. Make sure the top stops (the metal staples on the open side of the zipper) match up.

10. Start sewing half-inch side seams at the open zipper side. Put the needle down and push the bag right up against it, lower the presser foot and sew, backstitching only once. If your machine refuses to sew over the zipper, start sewing just below the coil instead. Repeat on the other side.

11. Trim seam allowances to a quarter-inch. You can stop here and turn the bag for a flat pouch or continue to the next step to add corners.

12. For the corner, cut out a 1-inch square of cardboard or gridded cardstock. Cut in half on a diagonal like a sandwich to make your corner template.

13. Grab the center of each side of your bag and pull outwards. This origami move will create a mitre (a pope or bishop's hat) shape and enable you to make the bag three-dimensional. Flatten and clip the sides in place.

14. Line up the corner with the tip of the hat and trace. Sew over these lines, backstitching at the start and finish. Cut the corners off, trim down to a quarter-inch.

15. Gently turn the bag right side out. You may need to use the rounded end of a marker to push out the corners without hurting your fingertips on the raw vinyl edges. Looks delicious, doesn't it? Enjoy!

Revolution Brewing

How to make an old-time Philly beer

by WILL DEAN

WINTER MIGHT SEEM LIKE a time for shutting down and hibernating, but it's also a perfect time for making a little something to help pass the cold months more easily. Here's a simple recipe for a porter—a dark, malty beer that has a long tradition in Philly dating back to Revolutionary times—from George Hummel of Home Sweet Homebrew.

First you'll need the right equipment:

- ❑ A carboy (basically a 5-gallon bottle)
- ❑ A large pot
- ❑ Some muslin bags
- ❑ Bottling equipment (bottles, caps, capper, plastic tube, racking rod)

And ingredients:

- ❑ 1 lb. British Amber Malt
- ❑ 1 lb. British Crystal
- ❑ ½ lb. Black Malt
- ❑ 6.6 lb. amber extract
- ❑ 1 oz. First Golding Hops (bittering)
- ❑ 1 oz. Kent Golding Hops (aroma)
- ❑ Packet of brewer's yeast

1. Fill the pot three-quarters full of water and bring to a boil. If you are using any whole grains, mill them, put them in a muslin bag and soak the whole thing in the pot for 30 minutes. Remove the pot from heat and take the grains out. Add your malt extracts and stir until they are completely dissolved.
2. Add the bittering hops. If you're using hop pellets, as we did, just toss them in, but if you're using whole hop flowers, put them inside a muslin bag. Boil for 60 minutes. Add the aroma hops in the last five to 10 minutes.
3. Remove the pot from heat and let stand for 15 minutes. Cool the pot by placing it in a larger pot with cold water and ice, until it reaches room temperature. Then transfer the mixture, called a "wort," to the carboy, either by pouring it in through a funnel or using a tube to siphon it. Add enough water to make it five gallons.
4. Then mix your yeast with room temperature water (if it's dry yeast), and put an airlock on top to let out the CO2 the yeast will produce in addition to alcohol.
5. After a week or so, transfer the mixture to another carboy and let it ferment for another two weeks. Then add three-quarters of a cup of dextrose (so the yeast can make some natural carbonation), bottle it and let it sit for another two weeks.
6. Drink.

One of the biggest problems in home brewing is contamination by bacteria that can turn your beer into a vinegary mess, so make sure all of your instruments are sterile, especially when you transfer the wort to the carboy. For more info, check with a home brewing shop or try the *Complete Joy of Homebrewing* by Charles Papazian.

Home Sweet Homebrew, 2008 Sansom St., 215-569-9469
homesweethomebrew.com

PHOTOS BY KATRINA OHSTROM

It's All Happening

What the sustainable community's up to

Solar Now

If you spend your evenings salivating over online photos of resplendent and shiny solar panels happily camped on rooftops, find out how affordable it can be at this panel discussion of local solar options at the Academy of Natural Sciences. The event will begin with an hour-long reception where you can talk to solar providers followed by a panel discussion to explain both how solar electricity production works and public incentives to help you pay for it. Andrew Kleeman, whose company Eos Solar is sponsoring the event, will put questions to providers like Christopher Blunt of Ojai Solar and public officials like Daniel Griffiths of the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection. The event is free, but you should RSVP at the website below, and then find other pictures to look at on your now solar-powered computer. *1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Thurs., Apr. 2, 5:30–8 p.m., free, 215-299-1000* solarnow.eventbrite.com

Garden Tenders

Tired of walking past that trash-filled vacant lot, but worried about L&I arresting you for daring to do something to fight blight? The Horticultural Society's Garden Tenders program can teach your community or nonprofit group the mechanics of dealing with the city's bureaucracy to legally turn a vacant lot into a vibrant garden and green space. It'll take a lot of work, but if you've got the vigor—and c'mon, you know you do—you can help transform your block. This is meant for groups, so bring your friends and neighbors, although individuals checking it out will not be turned away. Pre-registering is a necessity and can be done on the website below. *Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 100 N. 20th St., 5th Floor, April 1, 15, 22 and 29, 5:30-8:30 p.m.; May 6, 13 and 20, 5:30–8:30 p.m.; Sat., April 11, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., 215-988-8800* pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/gardentenders.html

SBN Green Collar Jobs

After only a year of groundwork, the Sustainable Business Network (SBN) has received a $125,000 grant from the Knight Foundation to found a Green Collar Jobs program in Philly. The goal is to train residents in jobs relating to sustainable initiatives like clean energy production and efficient construction and refurbishment. According to Leanne Krueger-Braneky, executive director of SBN and acting head of the project, they hope to hire a coordinator by mid-February. By working with local employers and labor unions, they plan to develop both job training guidelines and a report on the kinds of jobs Philly employers need by June. Then they will seek to renew their grant and hire an outside job training organization to get the first green collar employees trained and hired. *215-922-7400* sbnphiladelphia.org

GIMME SHELTER

Unlike the rock 'n' roll documentary of the same name that marked the end of the innocent '60s, this Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE) design experiment is all about hope for the future. SCEE challenged local artists and designers to come up with innovative and sustainable shelter designs that connect the abstract ideas of living more consciously with the realities of the natural world. On Feb. 6 at the Center for Architecture, six finalists were announced, including a giant firefly by Rashida Ng and Nami Yamamoto that will use photo-luminescent pigments to emit light at night, and a shelter by Rebecca Popowski and Riggs Skepnek that will use straw bale walls and a bamboo roof. The finalists will build their projects in the spring in the woods near the Center—the projects will be open to the public, and curious animals.

8480 Hagy's Mill Rd., 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., free, 215-482-7300 schuylkillcenter.org/gimmeshelter/

Mio Culture Soft Bowls

MADE OF WOOL, SOFT BOWLS ARE ARE RECYCLABLE, compostable and use one-tenth of the energy it takes to create ceramic bowls. Use them to separate your apples from your potatoes or to organize your daily clutter. Designed by Jaime Salm and Roger Allen of Mio Culture, and manufactured at one of the last US millineries located in northeast Philly. *Mio Culture, 446 North 12th St., 215-925-9359* mioculture.com

Beeluxe Candles

It might not be spring yet, but it can still smell like it. Beeluxe candles, fair trade-certified and made from organic beeswax, come in aptly-named scents like "tree fort" or "front porch swing." *Moko, 52 N. 3rd St., 215-922-6656*

Tymel Style Bags

"My daughter, Natalie, would come home from school as I was unpacking groceries and exclaim, 'Mom, I can't believe you. Do you know where those plastic bags end up?'" says Tyra Hodges, one half of Tymel Style. Melissa Parker, her friend and eventual business partner, shared a similar reaction from her own children. After doing extensive research, Parker and Hodges began to manufacture bags made out of recycled plastic polyfabric, designing them to be stylish as well as environmentally practical. Their company has been selected for the Business Incubation Program through Green for All, a national organization committed to creating green jobs to help the current troubled economy, as well as the environment.

Retrospect

Take a break from the jam-packed South St. sidewalks and test out some slightly-worn, secondhand furniture at Retrospect. You'll find an ever-changing stock of vintage furniture at low, thrift store prices. *Retrospect, 534 South St., 215-671-0116* retrospectvintage.com

Studio 34: Yoga | Healing | Arts

Baltimore Ave. in West Philly is home to 5,000 square feet devoted to your mental, physical and spiritual wellness. Studio 34 is a yoga studio, a gallery and a community meeting space, offering everything from photography classes to creative show-and-tell gatherings and yoga workshops led by internationally renowned experts. Enjoy the variety and the diversity of events. *Studio 34, 4522 Baltimore Ave., 215-387-3434* studio34yoga.com

STUDIO 34 PHOTO © JACQUES-JEAN TIZIOU / WWW.JJTIZIOU.NET. RETROSPECT PHOTO BY LUCAS HARDISON

Spring Forward

A guide to get you psyched for spring in Philly

by REESHA GROSSO

THE BEST TREATMENT FOR your Seasonal Affective Disorder is increased solar exposure, so leave those pajamas behind! Acclimate yourself to springtime's greenery, partake in a bit of sunshine and prepare yourself for the inevitable onslaught of insects with this whirlwind tour of Philadelphia's indoor and outdoor treasures, all committed to education and preservation. While most are free, all have options under $10 and are accessible by public transportation.

Fairmount Park's Horticulture Center

THE HORTICULTURE CENTER is the refreshing antidote to your grey city existence. The greenhouse was built in 1976 for the Bicentennial and is lush with tropical plants, statues and fountains all year round. In the visitor center, you can learn about the surrounding park's attractions, including a butterfly garden, reflecting pond, pinetum (an arboretum of evergreens) and the 27-acre Centennial Arboretum. Just behind the Horticulture Center, minimalist sculptor Martin Puryear's *Pavilion in the Trees* offers a cedar, oak and redwood walkway leading to a 24-foot high domed platform where you can sit among the treetops.

Continue on to Shofuso, a model of a traditional Japanese home, including an ornamental garden and teahouse, that is open May through October. The house was built in Japan for exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1954 and was moved to Philadelphia in 1958. Local masters demonstrate tea ceremonies one Sunday each month—reservations are required! Don't miss the free Cherry Blossom Festival on Sunday April 5 featuring live music, dance, food, and hanami, the Japanese tradition of enjoying the short-lived cherry blossoms.

100 N. Horticultural Dr., grounds 8 a.m–5 p.m., visitor center and greenhouse 9 a.m–3 p.m., free fairmountpark.org. **Shofuso,** *May–Oct., Tue.–Sun., 9 a.m.-4 p.m., adults $6, seniors $3, children under six free, 215-878-5097* shofuso.com

GET THERE *Take the 38 bus to Belmont Ave. & Montgomery Dr., then walk five minutes north on Montgomery and through the iron gates.*

Philadelphia's Insectarium

The summertime equivalent of a polar bear swim, the Insectarium holds a shocking number of bugs—just hold your nose and jump in. Thousands of familiar and exotic arthropods infest the largest insect museum in America, located in the Northeast. Depending on your comfort level, there are live insects to hold and mounted insects to inspect up close. A kitchen installation packed with hundreds of cockroaches, a live termite colony, glow-in-the-dark scorpions and a functional indoor/outdoor beehive are rendered innocuous by plexiglass barriers. Lots of just-for-kids activities, including games, puzzles and a manmade spider web, will keep even squeamish little ones thrilled.

8046 Frankford Ave., Mon.–Sat., 10 a.m.–4 p.m., $7, kids under two free, 215-335-9500 myinsectarium.com

GET THERE *Take the Market-Frankford line to the Bridge-Pratt stop. Transfer to the 66 bus on Frankford Ave. and ride it to the Welsh Rd. stop.*

John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge

Grab your bike, binoculars, canoe and fishing license and meet me at the Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1972 to preserve Pennsylvania's largest remaining freshwater tidal wetland, the Refuge is home to hundreds of species of birds and plants, as well as deer, turtles, frogs, muskrat, fish and snakes. The sustainably-built Cusano Environmental Education Center is a stellar (or should I say solar) example of environmentally-sensitive design. The Center also provides a resource library and exhibits on the Tinicum Marsh, watersheds and the importance of preservation.

8601 Lindbergh Blvd., grounds are open 8 a.m.–sunset, CEEC is open 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., free, 215-365-3118 fws.gov/northeast/heinz

GET THERE *Take the 37 or 108 bus to 84th St. & Lindbergh Blvd., then walk to 86th St.*

PHOTO BY TYLER GATES

Style and Substance

Philly U students learn the art and science of sustainable design

by JUDY WEIGHTMAN

SOMETIMES A RANDOM CONVERSATION with the person standing next to you in line leads to a new chapter in your life. That's what happened to Rob Fleming and Chris Pastore, faculty members at Philadelphia University. "We were waiting to get our ID cards and started talking," Pastore recalls. "It was immediately clear that we had to work together."

That work takes place at the intersection of two different but complementary fields: Fleming is an architect with an interest in sustainable design and Pastore is a materials scientist who works with low-density composites and other green materials. Together, they started the Engineering and Design Institute (EDI) of Philadelphia University in 2000.

The institute's goal is to help architects and engineers create structures with more thought to the environmental impact of the building in terms of its placement on the site, the materials used to build it and energy consumption over the life of the building. They do this in two main areas: design and materials.

They participate in the integrated design process known as *charette* (French for "little cart," evoking the idea of people "tossing in" their contributions to the process). Charette is a form of brainstorming, a place where everyone with a stake in a building work together to sketch out solutions that they can all endorse. That includes not only the client, architect, engineer and builder, but also representatives of everyone who will be using the building, from the CEO down to the janitor, as well as the neighbors who will be affected by it. Fleming and Pastore serve as green advocates to ensure that issues like energy use are taken into account from the very earliest stages of the design process.

The other main task at EDI is testing new building materials, helping small companies by determining and quantifying the performance of materials made from renewable resources. For example, EDI is currently involved in testing the properties of chitosan, a polymer made from an extract of chitin, the hard substance in the shells of crustaceans. The advantage of chitosan is that it's biodegradable—which is, of course, also a disadvantage when it comes to using it as a structural building material. To build with it, therefore, you need both something to make the chitosan wear- and weather-resistant for as long as several decades, and something that will counteract the hardening agent and set off triggered degradation of the material when its useful life is over. Further complicating things is the fact that these agents, like the chitosan, should be from renewable resources. EDI is currently two years into a three-year test of a hardener made with oxalic acid (from rhubarb) and a degradation trigger made with lysozyme (from egg whites).

THE EDI EMERGED from the specific collaboration between Fleming and Pastore, but its roots are deep in long-established programs in architecture, engineering and materials science at Philadelphia University. The synthesis is coming to further fruition in a new program, the university's M.S. in Sustainable Design. Begun in Fall 2007, the program "prepares students for leadership roles as we move from an industrial to an ecological model," according to Fleming.

The program, which emphasizes interdisciplinary cooperation, attracts young professionals from a variety of disciplines, including architecture and design, engineering, construction and business. They tackle class projects in teams that are mixed up from one project to the next, so "they learn to work cooperatively and to respect what other disciplines can contribute," Fleming says.

The process can be seen in Fall 2008's Green Materials course, which focused on chairs. Students started by literally taking apart a typical office chair and quantifying the materials,

> "They learn to work cooperatively and to respect what other disciplines can contribute."

EDI founders and co-hosts of "Ecoman and the Skeptic," Chris Pastore (left) and Rob Fleming.

down to measuring the thread and counting the bolts. They then did a life-cycle analysis, calculating the energy costs of creating and transporting it. Having determined the cost of a mass-produced chair (with all its economies of scale), three-person teams used found and recycled materials to build chairs at lower cost.

The process and results of the course exemplify the fundamental thrust of the program: the equal concern for sustainable materials and cutting-edge design. "We try to keep design in the science courses, and try to keep science in the design courses," Pastore emphasizes.

This creative pair continues to find new ways to serve the community and get the sustainability message out. Their latest project is an online radio show entitled "Ecoman and the Skeptic." (Fleming is the former and Pastore is the latter.) Streamed by the Green Talk Network, the show is, according to Pastore, "a dialectic approach to some of the more confusing issues surrounding sustainability. We don't always agree, and we don't always come to a conclusion, but that is reflective of the current situation."

Each week, the pair discusses news items from around the world and separates fact from fiction in a quiz. The meat of the program, though, is an interview with a sustainability professional, who fields questions both from Fleming and Pastore, and from the audience, which submits questions via email and Facebook.

Listen live Thursdays at 3:00 p.m., or download a podcast.
philau.edu/EcoManAndTheSkeptic

Balancing Act

Students pursuing Philadelphia University's MS in Sustainable Design tackled a delicate challenge in their Green Materials course: design and build a functional chair with found materials. Here are some of the results.

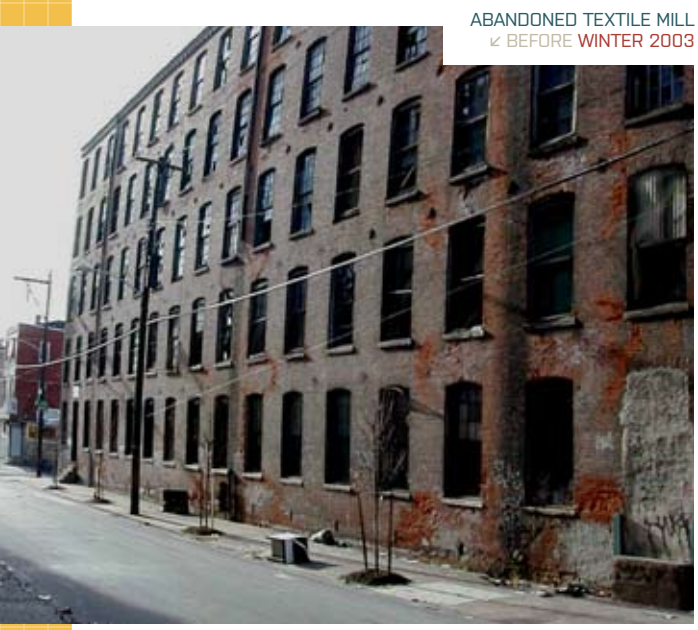
1. Seat belts from a junkyard and scrap wood.
2. PVC pipe from a construction site and popped inner tubes from a bicycle shop.
3. A box spring found on the street with wood from the frame, springs from the interior and cushion from the quilted cover. The straps supporting the backrest are the handles for picking up the box spring.
4. A milk crate cushioned with pieces of cut-up shopping bags and legs made of scrap material.

North Philly changes before our eyes

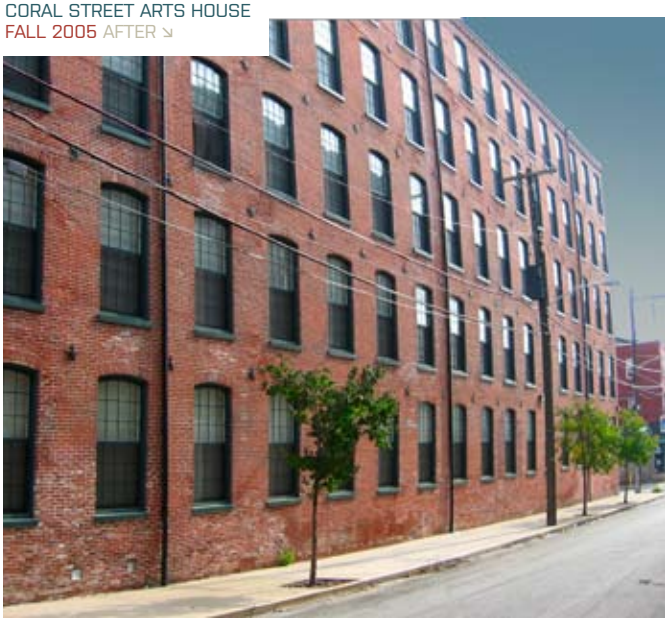
story by WILL DEAN *with additional reporting by* DANA HENRY

TRANSITIONING TOWN

ABANDONED TEXTILE MILL
↙ BEFORE WINTER 2003



CORAL STREET ARTS HOUSE
FALL 2005 AFTER ↘



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT A SUSTAINABLE CITY, what does it look like? Whether it's a futuristic, shiny sci-fi wonderland or a green treehouse-like Ewok village, you probably don't think of North Philly. With it's abandoned industrial buildings and bad reputation for drugs and crime, it doesn't seem like the place where a bright new future full of efficient gadgets and green spaces will emerge. That kind of thinking is a barrier, though, because it's exactly in those kinds of places that local sustainability can emerge, and on February 4 the Fishtown, East Kensington and Old Richmond sections of North Philly made a step towards becoming the most sustainable section of the city, and perhaps even the country.

Sustainable 19125 (the zip code for the area) is a new program assisted by the New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS). The details of the program aren't finalized, but it will probably include traditional sustainable initiatives like more urban gardening, classes on how to install rainwater barrels, the construction of a walkable greenway and incentives to encourage improvements like green roofs and solar water heaters.

New Kensington and PHS are currently leading the effort after receiving grants from the William Penn Foundation of over $500,000, but they plan on getting local groups and community members to take the idea and use it in their own ways.

"It's about sustainability and investing in the earth," says Sandy Salzman, executive director of New Kensington. The program will also invest in people with more classes for local students run by Earth Force, a Colorado group that educates school kids on environmental issues.

Although it seems ambitious, Sustainable 19125 is just one more in a series of changes the area has undergone in the last several decades, including a long decline and a recent revitalization shepherded by New Kensington and Salzman.

SALZMAN IS A SMALL, grey-haired woman with a powerful energy behind her twinkling eyes, and she has seen North Philly change.

She grew up in Fishtown, as did her father and her grandfather. Her family's home, on the 1700 block of Frankford Ave., was part of a row of storefronts with apartments above, and as a kid she played roller skates and hide-and-seek in the empty grocery store below. Today that building is a parking lot.

"The neighborhood had started a descent since the '50s," she says. "The block I lived on was demolished... Our houses are rowhomes, so when one house goes, it takes others with it."

Most of the houses in the area were built using salmon brick,

Volunteers sift through debris in one of the many vacant lots that became dumping grounds up until the late '90s.

Sandy Salzman gets an inside look at New Kensington's efforts at the Coral Street Arts House.
PORTRAIT BY SHAWN CORRIGAN

> We already have a lot of artists here; we wanted to give them the opportunity to get settled and put down roots.

and if one is demolished, the exposed brick—if not taken care of—will quickly degrade and the exposed house will have to be torn down as well. In addition, the I-95 construction was starting, which caused more problems.

"Looking at it all these years later it's [I-95] still having a negative impact; it's cutting us off from the river. When it came through, it displaced the area: families, schools, churches."

She left the area when she got married, as did many other people and much of the industry that once provided jobs. Salzman returned to Fishtown in 1971, but by then the area had "pretty much hit bottom," she says.

She got involved in community groups in 1979 and in '95 joined the New Kensington, a nonprofit whose mission was to revitalize the Fishtown, East Kensington and Port Richmond areas.

When Salzman joined, the empty lots in New Kensington's area looked like landfills. There were over 11,000 vacant lots, and many were filled waist-high with trash that included more than just soda bottles and sandwich wrappers. Construction companies were dumping debris, and people were tossing in full garbage bags, refrigerators, washers and car parts. There were even old boats found in the mix.

Salzman was partnered with the Horticultural Society by the Office of Housing and Community Development to help with a greening and clean-up effort called New Kensington 2000. The idea was to start cleaning up the vacant lots to build community involvement, start improving the look of the area and discourage dumping.

Before this partnership, it was just the scouts and the little old ladies willing to pitch in for an afternoon of clean-up. Then New Kensington bought a tractor and a bulldozer, and that's when the men joined in. In two years, nearly a third of the lots were cleaned. NK2000, now a neighborhood-wide effort, began planting up to 100 trees in a day, which incidentally relieved the sewage system by absorbing rain water and organizing guerrilla gardening. In 1998, they opened a garden center to provide free gardening education and supplies to neighbors.

The Art of Reusing Space

THANKS IN PART to the efforts of New Kensington and many, many community members, Salzman's childhood home is slowly changing again. In addition to obvious actions like planting trees and cleaning vacant lots, New Kensington has helped residents gain ownership of vacant lots next to their houses so people will

take care of the land, helped residents buy or keep their homes, assisted Greensgrow (an award-winning urban farm) in procuring their land, encouraged a burgeoning artist population and tried to walk the tricky line between revitalization and gentrification.

New Kensington, belying its name, actually serves a wide swath of North Philly. Originally it focused on the 19125 zip code, but in 2006 they added the 19134 area, up to the Frankford creek. Their most obvious areas of influence are right near their offices on Frankford Ave. in Fishtown and East Kensington. Galleries like Bambi and Highwire have opened, along with the Rocket Cat coffeeshop. There are still boarded-up buildings and empty lots, but clean parks, galleries and creative flourishes, such as a fence made of old doors, point to a community of artists that have made the area home.

Artists started to move into Fishtown after getting priced out by the increasingly gentrifying Northern Liberties. That former industrial hub had fallen into abandonment until artists moved in the '80s and '90s, then the area got hip and trendy, and pretty soon it became too expensive for artists and former residents to afford it.

In the early part of this decade, artists like Stan Heleva were looking further north, to Fishtown. "We were living in Northern Liberties, but couldn't afford to buy there," he says. "But we had heard all about 'Fishtown, Fishtown' as a growing artists' area." So he and his partner bought a house on Coral St. and started thinking about opening their own theater.

New Kensington saw that artists were moving in and decided to try and manage this new change in their area. "We could either embrace the artist or they come in, gentrification starts and the artist community gets pushed out," Salzman says. "We decided to embrace them because of the energy they bring and because they tend to do creative things with a neighborhood."

In 2005, a long-term plan of New Kensington's was coming to fruition on Coral and Hagert. Formerly a cotton mill, the largered brick building on the corner had been abandoned for decades until New Kensington bought it in the early '90s. Inspired by Artspace, an affordable artist housing project in Minneapolis, the Coral Street Arts House opened in 2005, and aside from winning design and historical preservation awards, has housed artists in one- and two-bedroom apartments that go for $300-$700 a month.

"The idea is that we already have a lot of artists here; we wanted to give them the opportunity to get settled and put down roots," says Laura Semmelroth, coordinator of Coral Street for New Kensington. "We realize artists are often pushed out when the neighborhood gentrifies, even if they are gentrifiers themselves."

In 2006, 2509 Frankford Ave. was a wreck, a "falling-down" building as Heleva describes it. He and his partner, Michelle Pauls saw an opportunity for theater. At the same time, New Kensington, which owned the building, was looking to attract artists who would stay in the area. So they sold Heleva and Pauls and their nonprofit production company Be Somebody, the property at $20,000 below market value. After 15 months of rehab where they stripped the building "down to its bricks," Walking Fish Theatre opened in 2007. Pauls and Heleva live upstairs with their young daughter, Astrid.

"Here we are now, wrapping up our second season, and we're really happy," says Heleva. "Our business has grown exponentially in between the first and second years." Their Valentine's Day Revival Burlesque show sold out and their Family Theatre events, the first Saturday of every month, were popular enough to require more dates next season.

Building Businesses

NEW KENSINGTON'S AREA already has dense residential structures and walkable streets that make it easier to both build a strong community and drive less, or not at all. Without strong local businesses, though, residents have to leave the area to work and shop.

Michael's Decorators, a furniture maker and restorer, moved to Frankford Ave. in 1989. Steve Tonuci, whose father started the company, has seen the business change, literally, thanks to the facade improvement grants New Kensington helped them get. "Before, our front was just blank wood, T-11 [a kind of wood siding]," he says. "We used every cent, and it looks 300 percent better." Now they have a big burnt sienna awning, plate glass windows to show off their furniture and an appealing mix of yellow and red bricks on the front wall.

"They're pretty good people down there," Tonuci says. "They've helped us a lot."

One of the most important functions New Kensington has played over the years is a communications hub for local businesses. New Kensington publishes a directory of local businesses in addition to helping arrange community business events, like the Business Breakfast Meetings that bring local owners together to talk and listen to a speaker about tax issues, how to develop a website and other business-type things.

When Yards Brewery moved into the old

→ New Kensington's Garden Center blooms with plants for the neighborhood

Walking Fish Theatre: an abandoned building loved once more.

> "Here we are now, wrapping up our second season, and we're really happy. Our business has grown exponentially in between the first and second years."

Weisbrod & Hess Brewery on Amber and Hagert in 2001, New Kensington sought them out and started a relationship. Since then, Yards has split into two companies, with the Philadelphia Brewing Company (PBC) keeping the Kensington building, and the relationship has continued. "They contacted us; it was nice they called," says Nancy Barton, co-owner of PBC. "They gave us lots of information about other local businesses."

Along with other businesses, PBC helps sponsor the biannual Frankford Ave. Clean-Up by running a big barbecue afterwards for the tired community cleaners. "They [New Kensington] go around and help get a lot of things donated—Fishtown Beverage donates soda, the Thriftway gives rolls," says Barton.

Barton has also been on the board of New Kensington for the past seven years. Although she is about to step down, she has seen the area change as a result of New Kensington's focus on attracting artists and helping businesses get access to city and state grants. "The Frankford Ave. Arts Corridor has been a big thing, and it's really changed the face of Frankford Avenue, so coming into the neighborhood, it's a much better feeling; there's a lot of new businesses and a lot of storefronts being rehabbed."

Strong Communities

OF COURSE, without a strong community of residents, there's no point to helping businesses.

On a recent February morning, the New Kensington office was bustling with residents looking for help in filling out applications for the Low Income Heating Emergency Assistance Program and Crisis Grants to get service restored. New Kensington functions as an energy center for the area, connecting residents with help paying for energy bills and making improvements on their homes.

It's also a housing agency. Counselors walk new homeowners through the process of buying a house and help them access any extra loans and grants.

They also try to help the community by assisting people who are about to lose their most precious assets, their homes, to foreclosure.

William Ortiz was facing a bad situation. After making some poor choices and letting his credit card debt get out of control, he followed some bad legal advice to declare bankruptcy and in July '08 he, his wife and their two kids were about to lose their house. "We would have been homeless," he says. "My situation wasn't like a lot of the other ones out there. I was making good money—I just made some bad decisions."

The company that held his mortgage, Washington Mutual, didn't want to deal with him, and he and his family were getting prepared for the worst. "I would be on hold for hours," he says. "They didn't want to talk to me, and when I talked to other people in my situation, it was the same all around."

Fortunately, in June, the city had created the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program in response to the mortgage crisis, forcing lenders to meet with delinquent payees and mediators to try and make some kind of deal. Ortiz was referred to the housing counselors at New Kensington, who had recently extended their service area into his neighborhood of Frankford.

"I talked to the NKCDC and got a package together of all my information, and we sent it to the company," he says. "It took weeks to get a response, and we had to eventually go to court to get them to talk to us."

Eventually, thanks to the city's new law and the help of the housing counselors, Ortiz had his foreclosure date pushed back and then worked out a deal where the interest was lowered and he didn't have to pay anything out of pocket. Ortiz, who works as a nurse, is grateful, but aware of how close he came to losing everything.

"We're on firm footing now, but if it wasn't for this program and the counselors, I would be homeless, god's honest truth."

A FEW BLOCKS FROM New Kensington's offices is one of the most impressive sustainable ventures in the city, Greensgrow Farms. On 2501 E. Cumberland St., the organic farm lies on a rehabbed brownfield—formerly abandoned industrial land—and grows organic produce for the area. They offer a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) that allows residents to pick up fresh produce from the farm every week during the spring, summer and fall. The farm also uses Integrated Pest Management, which uses natural predators and deterrents to keep out bugs and animals that eat crops, and runs equipment on reused biodiesel.

Several blocks in a different direction is New Kensington's Garden Center, at 1825 Frankford Ave. The center offers information on urban gardening, plants for sale and free compost and mulch from spring through late fall.

It is precisely those kinds of efforts, along with the creative reuse of our existing structures and reinvesting in our local communities and businesses, that can make our future sustainable. While more efficient lights are important, getting really connected with our local area is what sustainability is all about. Thanks to all the previous efforts and continued community-building, Sustainable 19125 has a chance of making some good changes in the area, which Salzman, though proud of how much has already changed, still sees as a necessity.

"On any given day, you can feel really good about what's going on, like the day after a clean-up; and on another day, like trash day with trash blowing around, you can think, 'Oh my god, there's so much to do.'"

But she isn't leaving—after living her entire life in the area, she's invested for the long-term. "My sisters all live in the neighborhood, too. It's amazing we're all still here, almost hard to believe."

BEER US

Philly returns to its beer making past

story by WILL DEAN · *portraits by* DAN MURPHY

When Schmidt's brewery closed in June 1987 after being bought by Wisconsin brewer G. Heileman, Philly officially switched from a beer-producing to merely a beer-drinking city. Although Schmidt's wasn't a taste explosion (my dad used to refer to it by a similar sounding expletive), the demise of the Northern Liberties brewer that once fermented a million barrels a year was a sign of the consolidation of a once thriving local industry.

In the 19th century up until the early 20th, our city was home to over a hundred breweries; there's even a whole neighborhood, Brewerytown, named for our beer-making past. Prohibition killed some of them, and the rest died out or were bought by larger competitors.

When Philly brewing officially ended, an *Inquirer* article at the time bemoaned, "It's more than an exercise in nostalgia we're talking about. With every regional food and drink we lose, America's tastes become more homogeneous, more bland."

Recently, that trend has begun to change. With the craft beer boom of the past decade, Americans have rediscovered the varied tastes of specialty beers, which are often brewed and sold locally. Philly has seen its share of brewpubs and microbreweries in the past few years, and now boasts two production breweries: Yards and the Philadelphia Brewing Company (PBC).

Yards was founded in 1994 in a Manayunk garage and has since grown from a three-barrel operation into Philly's preeminent craft brewer, producing 1,000 barrels a month.

Tom Kehoe, co-founder of Yards, like many craft brewers, started discovering different beers in high school. "I was getting into the dark imported beers," he says. "I came across an Anchor Steam [one of America's first microbreweries, located in San Francisco] and I tried it and thought, 'Wow, I guess there isn't any reason you can't have a really flavorful beer made in the US.'" Inspired, he started making his own beer in college and, after working at a microbrewery in Maryland, made the jump into production brewing. Since then, Yards has moved twice, landing in 2008 at a new spot on Delaware Ave., and become a staple at many local bars.

Philly also has numerous brewpubs that make and sell their own brew, like Nodding Head, Triumph, Earth Bread + Brewery, and Dock Street,

and a robust crop of regional microbreweries, like Stoudt's, Victory and Flying Fish.

These new businesses produce a variety of unusual beers that actually have flavors other than the washed-out moldy bread taste of the big brewers, and are often tied in some way to our area.

Yards produces a series of historical beers with recipes from Revolutionary times, like the rich and smoky General Washington Tavern Porter, and their hometown-named Philadelphia Pale Ale, which won an "excellent" nod from the *New York Times* in 2006 for its strong hoppy flavor and crisp finish.

PBC has the Rowhouse Red, a full-bodied red farmhouse ale that references our predominant housing style, and the Walt Wit, a Belgian-style white beer named for the local poet.

Local craft brewing is a growing concern, too. It's a 5.1 billion dollar industry that grew 6.5 percent by volume and 11 percent in dollars from 2006-07. Also, the number of regional craft breweries grew from 49 to 53 and microbreweries from 359 to 392 in the same time period. And even with a sinking economy causing failures in other sectors, the alcohol industry, for obvious reasons, is usually recession-proof.

Aside from different tastes, clever names and the boost to our local economy, there's something else that draws people to local beer: a link between a craft, a place, and the people who made it. Something that ties together the history and future of a place into that special feeling you get when you realize that an area is your home.

George Hummel from Home Sweet Homebrew mulls over what beer to make next

Tom Kehoe of Yards proudly hugs his company's beer

PHILLY'S CRAFT BEER INDUSTRY rose out of the home brewing culture of an unknown number of basement bottlers—people who liked to make new and interesting beers for their friends and family.

Some are members of the Homebrewers of Philadelphia and Suburbs, a local club that often meets at Home Sweet Homebrew, a brewing shop on Sansom St.

Walk into the charming Homebrew and you'll not only smell a rich, bready mixture of grains, but meet two fat, dusty orange cats, Jake and Elwood. George Hummel and wife Nancy Rigberg have run the shop for 22 years, well before craft beer was widely available or produced. They've seen the craft beer boom raise people's interest in home brewing, and oddly enough, occasionally hurt their sales.

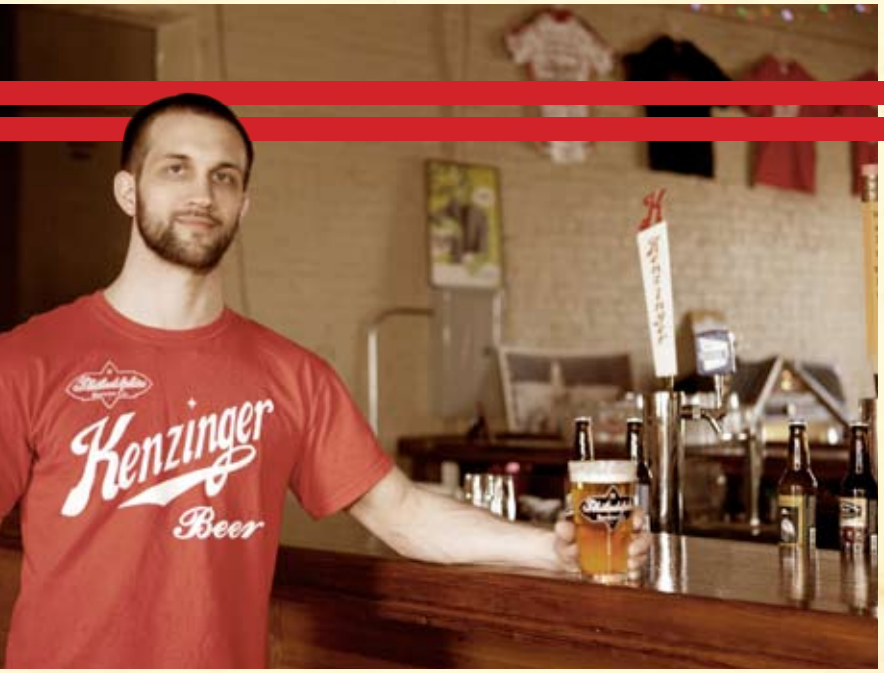
"At one point, we found that sales were down and a lot of our customers were saying, 'Well, there's so much good beer out there—why should I bother?' And all of a sudden, a year or two goes by and they realize that they miss the creative aspect of it—making something that's yours."

Bill Covaleski, of Victory Brewing Co. in Downington, followed his passion for making something that was his own into a successful local brewing company. "In 1985, I was a recent graduate of the Tyler School of Art and I borrowed my dad's home brewing kit," he says. "I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to make it my real job." After training in the industry he helped start Victory in 1996.

The other brewer actually in town, PBC, is one of the youngest of the local craft brewers. PBC was founded in 2007 by Nancy and Bill Barton, who formally co-owned Yards with Kehoe. When the two groups split, PBC kept the Kensington brewery building, which historically was home to the Weisbrod & Hess Brewery, while Kehoe kept the Yards name.

BEER WEEK!

Beer Week is coming to town for its second anniversary from March 6-15. There'll be all kinds of events and beers, including a beer and cigars night at Yards on the 13th, a homebrew swap at Dock Street on the 8th, a three-course meal with beer pairings at Jones and a special imperial stout that PBC brewed for the week. Don't miss this chance to enjoy the fun part of supporting local production.
phillybeerweek.org



← John Rehm, Brewer-in-Chief of PBC hoists a pint in their spacious tasting room

Although PBC's much younger as a standalone company, they have quickly made a name for themselves in Philly with their distinctive retro labels, strong commitment to local promotion and support of projects like Greensgrow Farm, farmer's markets and Sustainable Table, an online resource for sustainable living.

Considering the troubled economy, one might think that the slightly more expensive craft beers will suffer, but John Rehm, Brewer-in-Chief of PBC, isn't worried. "If anything, people will be doing more drinking at home," he says. "Maybe they'll buy less beer, but better beer. Beer is an affordable luxury."

Covaleski is also optimistic about the future of local craft brewing. After the sale of Anheuser-Busch, the largest American brewer, to the global conglomerate InBev last year, and an announcement of the loss of 1,400 jobs at the brewery, he sees a possible shift away from the dominant beers available. "Now that American macro beer has been globalized, a lot of loyalties that were passed down might shift. Real honest-to-goodness local production could redefine what American brewing is."

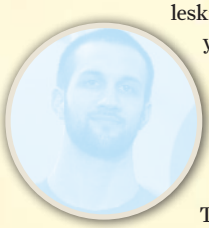
OUR KIND OF BEER

With all this talk about local beer we got to wondering what kind of beer is truly Philly's beer. Here are some answers:

GEORGE HUMMEL, Home Sweet Homebrew: "We have a tradition of both British and German styles of beer. At a certain level, I would say a porter is really the beer I associate with Philadelphia. That was George Washington's favorite beer when he visited Philadelphia and he actually arranged to have Philadelphia porter shipped down to Mount Vernon."

TOM KEHOE, Yards: Kehoe agrees about the historical importance of porter to our city. "Historically, Philly was known as a great maker of porter. Philly porter was as good as British porter and that was a point of pride," he says. For Philly's beer future, though, he sees a different brew. "Pale ale has come up at the forefront of the micro-movement. People know the style and what they're getting, instead of something like a double bock."

BILL COVALESKI, Victory Brewing Co.: "It's gonna have to be a lager. If you've been to American St., you can see the marker for where John Wagner made the first lager in America." On N. American St., between Brown and Poplar, you can see the blue historical marker Covaleski is talking about. In 1840, Wagner brought over lager yeast, which differs in production methods from ale yeasts, and made the first American version of the crisp, German beer.



JOHN REHM, PBC: Rehm agrees with the history line, but is more diplomatic about what Philly's beer is. "Traditionally, it's the lager, because lager was first brewed here. There's so much good beer here that you can't say one or the other. Variety is the best."

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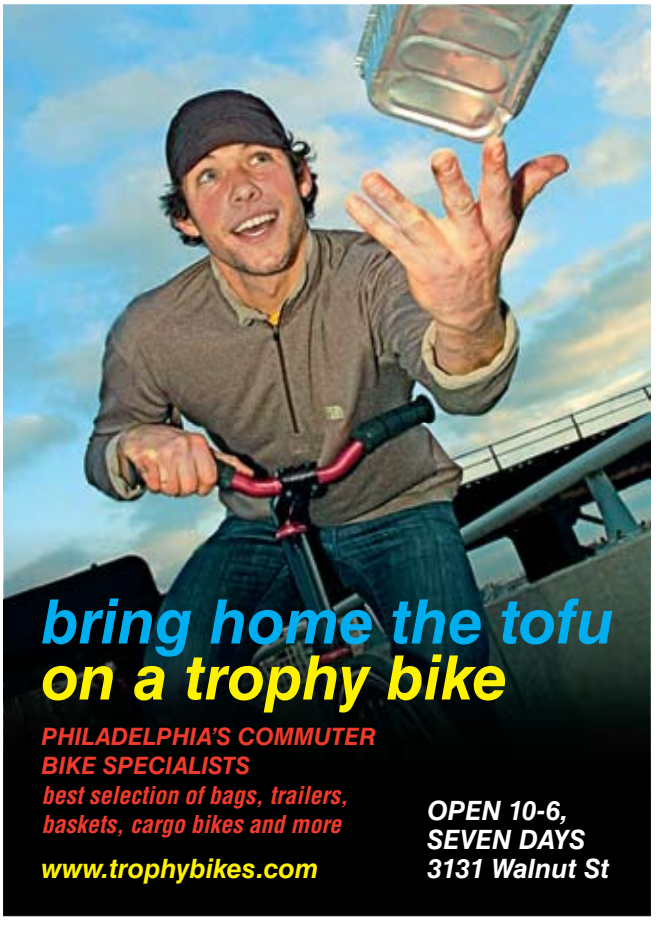

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FREE FLOW

An abandoned building becomes a hub for social activism in West Philadelphia

by NATALIE HOPE MCDONALD

JUST OFF THE NUMBER 10 GREEN LINE, west of the sprawling Penn and Drexel campuses and trendy restaurants, past the tiny street corner bodegas and dimly lit bars, a group of aspiring social activists saw something special in an abandoned building at 41st and Lancaster Ave. Up for sheriff's sale a decade ago, the dilapidated storefront dating back to the 1920s had been taken over by squatters and musicians who mostly borrowed the neglected space for band rehearsals and impromptu powwows.

The floors may have been rotted, the windows were broken and the roof leaked, but the property seemed the perfect place to start a revolution. Inspired by similar efforts by New York's ABC No Rio, a graffiti-covered community center on the Lower East Side, and the European squats movement, dedicated to reclaiming abandoned buildings, Philly's own grassroots social activists had a plan to rebuild the space into a salon for free thinkers. After countless art auctions, bake sales, movie nights and benefit concerts, the Lancaster Avenue Autonomous Zone, Inc. (or LAVA for short) purchased the property and spent the next several years turning it into the LAVA Zone, an independent collective operated exclusively by volunteers.

"We realized that a lot of organizations spend a lot of time raising money to pay for rent," says Jay Sand, one of the original founders and a longtime volunteer at LAVA Zone. "We wanted to pull some resources together and develop a space that would be low-cost for organizations that don't have the money. We wanted to create a physical space to connect with each other."

Physically rebuilding a neglected property on the city's fringe was only the beginning of the center's community outreach. There aren't many rules at LAVA, but an important one is that anyone involved must somehow contribute to the surrounding neighborhood in a positive way, whether by feeding the hungry, teaching a workshop or volunteering in the center's computer lab or radical library, where books by Noam Chomsky, Joseph Stalin and Charles Bukowski line the shelves.

Today, the collective houses almost a dozen activist organizations and alliances, like Act Up, Human Rights Coalition and Philadelphia Anarchist Black Cross Federation, as well as the Independent Media Center of Philadelphia, Taxi Workers' Alliance, the Green Party and Rizumu, a monthly techno party for vegans, to name just a few. There's also an ongoing effort to showcase installations by local artists, many of which incorporate eco-friendly and found materials, including wheat-pasted posters, mosaics made from recycled tile and glass, and a solar-powered sculpture. Each month, local graffiti artists also create new politically charged works in the space.

"It's a work in progress," admits Sand. "One of the reasons we call it LAVA is we like the image—not of destruction, but of movement and progress and flow, of going somewhere."

There's been a steady stream of workshops, events, benefits, screenings, protests, potlucks and parties at the center, which makes office space available for like-minded groups and supports a community kitchen where Food Not Bombs regularly distributes free food to nearby residents. Operating funds, says Sand, are offset through charitable donations and by "passing the hat" at special events open to the public each week. You may walk into a freestyle dance show on Friday, a *Defenestrator* meeting on Tuesday or Thursday's prison letter-writing night.

"It's hard to characterize what impact one tiny little place has on the larger community," says Sand, but LAVA invites neighbors to participate in events, go online and borrow educational materials. "We hope to positively impact a lot of individuals," he adds, in a pay-it-forward fashion. "We're not getting in the way of what's happening in the neighborhood. We want to be another resource. We contribute where we can and enhance what people are already doing."

LAVA Zone, 4134 Lancaster Ave., 215-387-6155
www.lavazone.org

PHOTO BY LOU CATALBIANO

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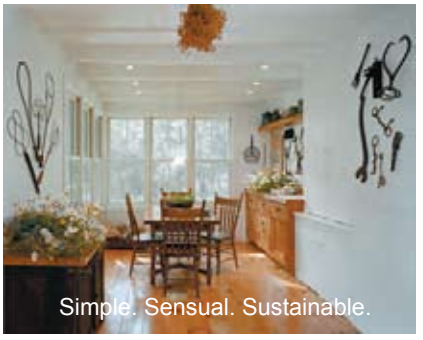

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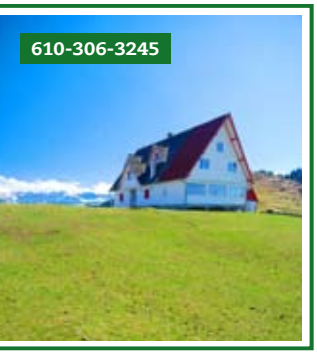

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GRID CLASSIC

The Ecology of Commerce:
A Declaration of Sustainability

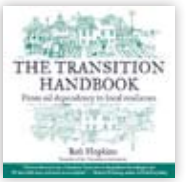
by Paul Hawken

HARPER COLLINS, 1993; $19.96

Paul Hawken, author, entrepreneur and activist, debunks the tired notion that business and the environment are somehow at odds. "Common wisdom holds that ecologists worry about nature while economists are concerned with human beings," Hawken explains. "But economists are in fact taking care of economics, and human beings are abandoned to the marketplace."

Sound familiar? Hawken outlines, in detail, just what cheap goods are costing. Under the pressure of production our essential ecosystem has been splintered into commodities. Human beings have been marginalized into consumers, enslaved by self-imagery. Destruction drives success: Materialism lays waste to culture, jobs and wages are cut for profit, wealth divides, money destabilizes, healthcare costs spike and cancer increases while immune systems deteriorate. Government, legal systems, media outlets and even nonprofit and charitable efforts have become the hands of an invisible dictator.

This is not, of course, a new story, but the beauty of Hawken's rendition is that there are no villains, only an impending situation. In the real world, even CEOs are paralyzed against their better senses. Hawken's precise explanation of corporate mechanics, however, puts fate back in our hands. Our world has been altered largely through our uninformed support, and the better we understand the system, the better we can guide its evolution. Now, the author implies, is the critical time to put down the remote and start learning. Business has led us down a dark alley, but ironically it is also our way out. This does not mean "greening," marginal efforts that Hawken claims are little more than a sentimental reaction to Earth Day. This means redesigning a restorative economy from the ground up—a whole new style of commerce: creative, inspiring and purposeful. Sustainable businesses, which Hawken defines and draws up guidelines for, are built from our better values, not our bare weaknesses. It's an economy to enable our future, and one that our unwritten future enables us to realize. —DANA HENRY



The Transition Handbook

by Rob Hopkins

CHELSEA GREEN, 2008; $24.95

Transitions Towns is a worldwide network of communities awakened to the reality that outside expertise isn't likely to offer up salvation. In this century, we face unprecedented climate change, energy droughts, unstable food systems and global economic decline. Instead of waiting on a solution, the handbook shows how to start building our own, one small town at a time. Back in 2005, permaculture instructor Rob Hopkins published the Energy Descent Action Plan for Kinsale, an Irish town of about 7,000, offering a timetable for getting the hamlet off of oil and towards local resilience.

The movement has since spawned thousands of followers, including Santa Cruz, CA and Boulder, CO. Although it has yet to reach a city the size of Philadelphia, there is no formula, and transition principals may be applicable to any neighborhood. —DANA HENRY

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Meet the woman whose two-year-old son was killed by e.coli in a fast food hamburger, the farmer who lost her contract with Tyson after refusing to keep her chickens in a coop that doesn't allow sunshine, and another farmer targeted by the food industry for saving seeds, a practice as old as agriculture itself. —ALEX MULCAHY

A Simpler Time

Southwark offers a connection to local food

by WILL DEAN AND ASHLEY JEROME

WHEN YOU WALK IN the front door of Southwark, it feels a little like you're going back in time, which makes sense. Southwark got its name from an 18th century district of the city and it fits because preserving history, including a tangible connection to the land, is important to owners Sheri and Kip Waide.

"Our personal philosophy of how we always ate at home was local," says Sheri, who runs the kitchen, while Kip does the drinks. "And when we first opened we did a small amount, but as the years have gone on we've progressed to do a lot more."

Even in the winter, nine of their 14 dinner dishes come from local sources. Local delicacies like chickens from Meadow Run in Lancaster, mushrooms from Oley Valley Mushrooms and goat cheese from Shellbark Hollow Farm are featured. Sheri tries to run it like a closed-loop system, where Southwark's waste oil becomes fuel for Meadow Run's equipment, and egg cartons and produce boxes are returned for reuse.

Like much of the produce, Southwark's connections to local farms grew organically over time. They met farmers at markets and learned about their offerings firsthand in their own kitchen. "When we opened the restaurant, we continued to buy from them personally and also as the restaurant," says Sheri. "Daryl Rineer—we get beef and eggs from him—we met him at the Passyunk farmer's market."

That kind of traditional city-folk-to-farmer relationship fits in well with the décor of the front bar. Slow ceiling fans with big, rattan blades hang off the pressed tin ceiling and match the restored, dark mahogany bar.

The crowds there are usually large, loyal and friendly. As we try to decide between the duck and the calves liver (I know, what a hard life it is), a guy at the bar with stretched earlobes insists the calves liver was not to be missed.

Homemade capellini, using local flour, accompanies earthly, slightly chewy wild oyster and shiitake mushrooms from Oley Valley, and the yolk of a poached egg from Rineer Family Farms draws all the flavors together. The recommended calves liver has a silky outer texture with a grainy feel on the inside, while the robust sweetness of the caraway spaetzle added a honey-sweet finish and the Madeira helps make the whole dish taste like fall.

For dessert we're super excited to see pawpaw ice cream on the menu. Pawpaws, in addition to having an adorable name, are the only fruit native to our area and look like small bananas, but taste sweeter. The ice cream mixes coffee, caramel and vanilla flavors, and makes us wonder where in Philly the pawpaw trees grow.

Hunting down something like the pawpaw shows that the Buy Fresh, Buy Local idea is more than just a sticker to Sheri. "We're doing what we say we do—this is what I believe in. Why would I say I believe in this and go and give you something else?" ■

Southwark, 701 S. 4th St., 215-238-1888
southwarkrestaurant.com

For Every Season

Southwark's menu changes frequently, but right now you can try these dishes:

Stuffed Leek "I've never had leek like this," we mutter as we cut into this leek, stuffed with mushrooms and grains. It has a beefy flavor, but the dish is all veggies and grains. The rutabaga gives the stuffing a caramelized flavor to contrast with the earthy, roasted wild mushrooms and thick spelt grains.

Duck with Smoked Confit and Creamed Corn The seared medium rare duck breast and confit, which is salt-cured and poached in duck fat, has a rich flavor, making us feel like royalty eating a duck presented by a hardworking peasant. Surprisingly, the creamed corn vies for our attention, as it has a good balance of sweet and salty.

Butter Cookies with Lemon Curd The homemade lemon curd is cool and refreshing with a touch of tartness, and fits well with the flaky butter cookies for a nice light dessert if you're not up for the pawpaw ice cream.

PHOTO BY TYLER GATES

Environmental Effects

Patient as Person, City as Healer?

by NATHANIEL POPKIN

IN THE EARLIEST DAYS of the Center for Community Partnerships at Penn, a project I was a part of for a few years in the mid-'90s, we considered (but never executed) a "misery/happiness index" for West Philadelphia. The index was an idea of the historian Lee Benson, the Dewian visionary who believed that an engaged university was a unique engine of participatory democracy. Benson didn't hope to facilitate another study of an urban neighborhood, but rather he wanted to create a quantifiable tool to help West Philadelphians reflect on the relationship between the quality of their own lives and the condition of the city they live in.

The idea that urban environmental factors influence emotional well-being is ages old. It took hold in the Philadelphia gothic novel of the early 19th century, ran through Poe and on to the writer David Gaddis and the wide spectrum of film noir. And don't we believe it—the vast American suburb is in large measure the product of a nominal quest for wholesome air.

But many doctors don't—or can't—take into account environmental causes of distress, explains Joe Gallo, a Penn family physician, whose research team has dreamed up an entirely new approach to urban mental health, one that follows Benson's participatory model. Gallo is soft-spoken and warm, generous and fatherly. Though he spent years at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, his accent betrays New Rochelle, the Long Island town where he was raised. "When you're a physician and you're taking care of people, you realize there is a realm you don't have control over. It's not medicine. One approach is that you ignore it," he says, explaining an intrinsic dilemma in contemporary health care. "But I don't tend to think that way."

So Gallo's center, approved in principle but awaiting funding from the National Institutes of Health, incorporates a notion: *person is patient, patient is person*. It underlies this approach to medicine.

The center will combine "shoe leather epidemiology" with community action to build a new structure for the delivery of mental health services for older adults in West and Southwest Philadelphia. His team will employ and train block captains and other leaders of "helping networks" across neighborhoods and cultural groups to learn what causes distress and how it's handled—Gallo thinks many people don't go to their doctor when they're in distress. He wants to know where they do go, if at all, so that interventions can be made organically, in the context of a multi-faceted urban life.

The Penn physician Marsha Wittink is a member of Gallo's research team. She says one of the things that makes the center unique is its focus on urban spatial analysis. In order to better understand the spatial distribution of helping networks, the project will partner with Penn's Cartographic Modeling Lab, the outfit that maintains the Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

From there, it's a short step to asking how neighborhood factors enhance or inhibit well-being. Pedro Rodriguez, former director of the Action Alliance of Senior Citizens, says the question is revealing—he draws a line from the decline of Philadelphia's housing stock to unsafe living conditions to respiratory problems caused by poor ventilation to depression due to isolation and also overcrowding, which leads to abuse at the hands of extended family.

This is the kind of granular understanding that Gallo and Wittink think will lead to a big breakthrough, the integration of mental and physical health care with an approach that considers urban effects. It's potentially an intuitive marriage of city planning and public health, the city—its intrinsic capacity to connect people—as healer. "Everybody knows this is what needs to happen," says Wittink.

Now imagine a line running from vital public spaces and "third places" to efficient, safe and dry transit (bus shelters on every main corner) to the very act of neighborhood planning and community organizing to the happiness and well-being of older adults. (Rodriguez notes that "people who participate in organized struggle generally have better physical and mental health.")

So Joe Gallo is anxious to get to work. "I want to change the field," he says, "but if we just talk about it, it will stay talk." He pauses and raises his arms above his head to make the point. "You can't be here and not think big. We're the heirs to Ben Franklin." ■

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